

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**MOGAN CULTURAL CENTER
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
KHMER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT II**

**INFORMANT: VAN LY [CAMBODIA]
INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI
TRANSLATOR: SENGHAP REOUN
DATE: DECEMBER 21, 2006**

**A = ALI
T = REOUN
L = LY**

Tape 06.03

Note: “T” will be used to denote Translator’s voice, translating the questions asked of and the responses from the informant.

A: This is interview with the venerable Van Ly. It’s Thursday, December 21, and we’re here at the Glory Buddhist Temple on Cambridge Street in Lowell. Today’s interview is going to be translated by Senghap Reoun. Okay, first a little bit of background information. Where and when were you born?

T: He was born in Battambang Province, the town called Don Tiv. The year of the sheep. He doesn’t remember. So he has to look at the [other card].

A: Okay.

T: Oh, 88, 88 years old. (A: Okay) So we can subtract that. Um, in Khmer?

A: No, in English.

T: He was born on April 23, 1917.

A: Let me see.

T: He went back six times and he got back here, and he doesn’t remember when he went back.

A: Okay. The name of the town where he was born, does that also include the village, specific village?

T: It's the town. The state is Battambang. So the town is Don Tiv. Like the region of like Middlesex, like the county, the county called [Kom Knol].

A: [Kom Knol], okay. [Name unclear], did you always live in that part of Cambodia?

T: He was born there. When he got married he moved out from that location to another town. There's a county called [unclear] where he got married. So that he moved over there.

A: Okay. What did your parents do for work?

T: Import/export the rice. Import/export rice within the region [overseas].

A: Okay. So was his family fairly well-off financially?

T: Okay. Financially it's not clear on how much money, but later on then become a farmer. When he got to 20, after 20 and then he become a farmer.

A: Okay. What were your parents' names?

T: The father's name Tiv Ka Sor. Mom named Hou Sean. [Repeats] Hou Sean. Also was born in Don Tiv. The father was originally from China. He was Chinese background.

A: Okay. And how about his grandparents? Does he know the names of his father's parents?

T: The grandparents on the mother's side is named Hou Sean. [Repeats as he write it down] Hou Sean.

A: Write the parents names first too for me.

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T: Mother, Hou Sean. Father, Tiv Ka Sor. So it's sure Chinese.

A: And so his mother's parents' names?

T: Grandpa, Kong Sean. Grandma, Ma Yin.

A: And those are his mother's parents right? And do you know your father's parents?

T: He don't remember.

A: Okay. In what part of China were they from if he knows? He doesn't know?

T: He doesn't know.

A: Okay. What was your first job [unclear?]

T: Farmer.

A: Farmer? And he stayed where, in that Province?

T: There's a country called [unclear], and the town called [unclear].

A: And what year did you get married, or how old was he when he got married.

T: He was married when he was 21.

A: Okay. And what was his wife's name?

T: Than Sea.

A: And how many children did they have?

T: One, in France right now. Boy, one boy. Tiv Kim Lon, son.

A: Okay, (interrupts) that's the name of the son. Sorry. Now were you involved in any community activities before World War II?

T: No.

A: No. And do you remember when the Japanese came and took over Cambodia?

T: Don't remember. Too long. Yah, forget [unclear].

A: Do you remember any political activities leading up to the independence of Cambodia from France?

T: Don't remember, and also didn't really get involved that much .

A: Okay. What about later on as an older adult? Did he get involved in any activities, community?

T: Never involved in any political. Just working and try to raise the family.

A: Okay.

T: Then a little better. The life started getting better, he bought a truck to do the farm. Just the farmer.

A: Okay. And then does he remember first hearing about Khmer Rouge?

T: Don't remember much, and don't really know much. All he knows that it's Khmer Rouge, but don't remember day, time and place, or anything like that.

A: Okay. Does he remember the first time that he saw them, or what happen when they took over his area?

T: Just remember the conquer of the whole country. Take over the whole country.

A: What was his thoughts at that time?

T: Didn't really get involved in politics. So don't have a lot of thought on it. They just tried to do whatever it takes just to survive.

A: And tell us about your experiences during that time, during the war?

T: Of course they took everything from that truck that he, truck.

A: The truck that he had?

T: They had.

A: They took the truck away from him?

T: They took it away from him.

A: Did they threaten him at all?

T: Just fear of life, they do whatever they ask them, they're asked to do.

A: What happened after the war? How did he end up emigrating?

T: After the war, after the war he just took off with someone. He don't remember who. And then he remember that he got here in 1981, to the United States in '81.

A: What happened to his family, his wife?

T: His son left Cambodia before the war. So, and then the war start and then he came to the United (--)

A: So his son went to France before the war to study?

T: Yah, to study.

A: Okay, and how about [propun?]

T: Ah, come with him.

A: Came, the wife came with him. Does he remember any interesting stories about being in the refugee camps?

T: He don't remember much.

A: When he first came to the U.S., where did he go?

T: He arrived in Lowell.

A: He came to Lowell in '81. Okay. And what year did he become a Monk?

T: Become a Monk in '89.

A: '89. So what did, what did you do for work when you came to Lowell in '81?

T: He never been working.

A: Okay. And what made him decide to become a Monk?

T: To preach all Cambodian to believe in religion.

A: Okay. And did he start the Glory Buddhist Temple?

T: He's the founder of the Temple.

A: And where was the first location?

T: In Lowell, but he don't remember where, but it was in (--)

A: Is there only two locations?

T: Yah, [unclear]. It was at the house.

A: Does he have any pictures of the Temple?

V: [Unclear].

A: We don't need to get them right this second.

T: He was, he was the founder of the old Temple. A part of the founder of the old Temple.

A: The Wat?

T: The Wat.

A: [Names Temple]

T: Yah, and then they owe a few, fifty thousand to that, and then they recruit enough money, generate enough money and pay it off. But due to some internal politic, or whatever the sort, then he left over there, and started this Temple.

A: In what year was that?

T: He tried to remember. He doesn't remember when.

A: Okay. And what was the disagreement about at Wat [Unclear], at the old Temple?

T: Don't really want to tell about it, because if you say it, it will probably [unclear] someone who is in the [property]. Instead of fighting or get any difference in agreement, so he decided to (--) After he left he kind of didn't really tell anybody about what's going on. So he just took off. Don't want any friction between the (--) After he left a few other people followed him, and then he started the Temple.

A: What does he consider some of his greatest accomplishments?

T: The great accomplishment is that to maintain the religion. Improve the religion. To come to improve religion better. One of the preach that the religion tend to do that he disagree with, or does not believe as a religion is the holy water. Holy water is the way some people believe that when you go to the Monk, and the Monk will give you blessing in holy water, you feel better and so on, and so forth, he doesn't believe in that. He look at that as a business where you give money to the Monk and so on. If that the case, if you, if the Monk or someone who had that power to do that, then it's not religion, it's something, a business. So he overlook that aspect, or that activity is again that religion. So therefore his preach will be more meditation, more on concentration, not on those activity that had money coming in.

A: Ask him if we can come back and talk to him about some of his stories that he knows about like creation, and the stars and the planets. I've heard him tell some stories before. And maybe old tales from back in Cambodia.

T: When the people come here they're looking for someone who's [secure]. Holy water and stuff like that, ask for blessing or be safe, or security and all of that. They looking for advice that life will be (--) That's not because of holy water, but who you are and how you appreciate other, how you treat other, and how good you are to other, or how good

you are to take care of yourself, instead of give blessing where hopefully [that will come].

A: So did he say we could come back and talk to him some more?

T: Yah.

A: Okay.

?: Where did he get his training?

T: He got, he trained himself a lot about practicing religion. He [unclear] about nine months [unclear] to study, and he was a Monk one when he was young.

A: He was?

?: Oh he was huh?

T: He was.

A: And then he tend to teach himself, reading and writing, and stuff like that because he really didn't have a chance to go to real school. Actually say it again. Sorry.

T: Okay. He wrote the books that translate from Khmer to the English religion practice. He's looking for that book to share and give it out.

A: Tell him he gave me one already. So.

T: When did he give it out to you?

A: Last year.

T: One part English, one part Khmer?

A: Yes. [Loctar [(unclear)]. Thank you very much for your time. Okay.